

Spring 5-23-2019

## It's Me, Sarah

Fabiola Y. Andrade Chinchilla  
fyandrad@uno.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td>



Part of the [Film Production Commons](#), [Screenwriting Commons](#), [Visual Studies Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Andrade Chinchilla, Fabiola Y., "It's Me, Sarah" (2019). *University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations*. 2582.  
<https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td/2582>

This Thesis is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by ScholarWorks@UNO with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Thesis in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Thesis has been accepted for inclusion in University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UNO. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@uno.edu](mailto:scholarworks@uno.edu).

It's Me, Sarah

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts  
in  
Film and Theatre  
Film Production

by

Fabiola Andrade

B.A. UNITEC San Pedro Sula, 2010

May, 2019



## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	IV
I. Introduction.....	1
II. Pre-Production.....	3
A. <i>Writing</i> .....	3
B. <i>Casting</i> .....	5
C. <i>Directing</i> .....	6
D. <i>Cinematography</i> .....	8
E. <i>Production Design</i> .....	10
F. <i>Sound</i> .....	12
III. Production.....	13
A. <i>Shooting Affairs</i> .....	13
IV. Post-Production.....	18
A. <i>Editing</i> .....	18
V. Conclusion.....	20
Works Cited.....	23
Films Cited.....	23
Appendices.....	24
<i>Appendix A: Screenplay</i> .....	24
<i>Appendix B: Crew List</i> .....	47
<i>Appendix C: Cast List</i> .....	48
<i>Appendix D: Visual References</i> .....	49
<i>Appendix E: Look-Book</i> .....	53
Vita.....	64

## **Abstract**

This paper describes the making of *It's Me, Sarah*, a University of New Orleans thesis film. It explores the process of creating the film in three parts. Part one will examine the pre-production, including the writing and preparation for the shoot. Part two will detail the production, including the shooting affairs. Part three will cover the post-production process, which will include the editing. The document will then reference these three segments regarding the film's theme and will conclude by evaluating whether the final film achieves its intended conception.

**Keywords:** Sarah, coming of age, amnesia, trauma, self-empowerment, healing, psychological drama, film.

## I. Introduction

My goal for *It's Me, Sarah* was to create a story about self-empowerment. I wanted a protagonist who, through finding self-love, would overcome her bewilderment caused by toxic submission. I then chose that her method of exploring herself would be told through a surreal experience in which she would find purpose by foregoing logical thought. Though this premise seems contradictory, it is the foundation of surrealism.

Sarah, the protagonist, is the victim of an abusive stepfather. In his most recent act of mistreatment, he inflicted injuries that not only scarred her skin, but given the emotional trauma of the ongoing events, also resulted in causing her amnesia. The plot centers on her need to find out why she lost her memory to prevent a future attack from him.

Along Sarah's journey, she crosses through her bedroom mirror and meets a parallel version of herself. This other Sarah aids the protagonist in gaining her memory by finding ways to stimulate Sarah's memories. These actions progress Sarah's journey in regaining her memory.

In order to achieve the vision of this film, I needed to push beyond my previous boundaries as a filmmaker. Since the other Sarah's location is a reversed replica of Sarah's room, I had to build a set in the sound stage in the University of New Orleans' Performing Arts Center. Also, since two versions of the protagonist exist in the story, I decided to cast twins. The last major challenge was to find a location that would not only serve the purpose of the story, but would also match the set built for Sarah's room.

The creative process of this film proved to be long and challenging. With the story being a highly stylized drama, I had to find a director of photography who would have the experience and vision to capture the surrealist quality. Finding the right set of twins to play the protagonist

and her counterpart was a hurdle as well. However, the most strenuous part of the process was the set building. These three factors were the trials that I had to overcome to prove that I was capable of making this film.

Once all the pre-production elements had been overcome, production was its own obstacles and successes. Some of the tasks of pre-production spilled into the production phase, which caused some of the shoot to be delayed. However, for the first time in my filmmaking career, I was able to capture all of my intended footage in principal photography. Using live animals on set and executing a stunt sequence only added to this sense of accomplishment.

This paper will elaborate on the events mentioned above as well as detail whether I succeeded in executing my vision. Overall, this project was a challenge to my idea of what filmmaking is as well as a triumph in overcoming obstacles.

## **II. Pre-production**

### *A. Writing*

I resisted writing a story so personal for a long time. Not once in my previous projects had I attempted to write something based on my experience, or that I cared profoundly for. I used to treat my scripts as carriers of idea exploration within rationality, or at least removed from any sentimental connection to me. This approach changed when Erik Hansen, our screenwriting professor, gave me blunt, honest, and significantly less-nuanced than usual advice regarding the usage of personal experiences. For some reason, his words had a feeling of urgency, like when a good friend prepares an intervention. Although the friend may sense that the advice will not be well-received, he must try to convince you for your benefit. Since I had other plans for my thesis script, I initially resisted the approach. I had always felt that assignments should be separated from feelings or personal life. Filmmaking is different. If it has no soul, it cannot live, and the script is the root of the film. Erik showed me that notion and I finally started asking myself, “What matters to me that may that be worth sharing and have high cinematic potential?”

Some answers were not hard to find, but I treasure my privacy. Therefore, I was afraid to pursue those truths. However, a quote by Nayyira Waheed kept looping in my head: “The thing you are most afraid to write. Write that.” This wisdom inspired me to begin fleshing this person who experienced trauma and, after some exploration and with the help of the right forces, manages to initiate the path of healing and overcoming. That was the beginning. Then, the structural part of screenwriting and sociologically important issues arose. The tone and pacing of this story are so important to me, since I dislike how abuse is often represented in



movies. These films either show the abuse in a sensationalist, close to careless way where the victim just magically deals with it, or through a painful, unredeemable melodramatic angle. I aimed to preserve the tenderness without losing the potential for healing.

Every script is best preceded with vast research. This script, which deals with such delicate issues as abuse and trauma, needed to be honored with the coverage of every aspect through due research.

To accomplish this task, I visited psychologists and studied the areas and behaviors that this script contains, such as paraphilia and dissociative disorders. My most specific concentration was on dissociative amnesia. I spoke with people who have gone through similar experiences, read extensively, and researched significantly more than I had before, all to honor the themes and events of this piece. I was recently recommended to read the book *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. This book not only exemplifies the healing process, but also gives scientific support to multiple actions and circumstances of my protagonist: Sarah.

I tested the reception of the screenplay in classes and workshops. The feedback was kind. This testing, aside from being motivated by the natural curiosity of any writer, was propelled by the delicate nature of certain dynamics, such as that between Sarah and Scar-less Sarah. People seem to perceive that Scar-less Sarah's actions come from a pure, well-meaning place, which is crucial to me since it contains a literal self-love scene between both. If this scene is not effective, it could defeat the purpose of my film's artistic and moral intention and turn it into some shallow cliché.

Classes and workshops brought me some relief, but I decided to test its quality outside the program. With the help of Hamp Overton, my thesis committee chief, and Erik, I submitted a draft to a Screenwriting Contest called Backstory. The script proceeded to the final round, and despite not having won, reached the top 10 finalist pond. The results were better than what I had hoped for and gave me some confidence and peace regarding the delicate events and dynamics narrated in my script. I continued to work in the script. As locations were secured and blocking had occurred, some adjustments and improvements took place while filming; preserving the idea but adapting to the scene or character unfolding.

### *B. Casting*

To find the twins, I created accounts on Breakdown Express, Actor's Access, and other casting websites and posted that I was looking for twins between eighteen and twenty-five years old. During the process, I received many responses, but not all of the applicants were twins. Therefore, I had to scan each of the applicants and determine if they filled the role requirements. Once all the searching was over, I found that all the viable candidates were from outside of Louisiana. I was prepared for this to be an obstacle, however, and decided to proceed with the casting.

While watching the video auditions, I found three sets of twins that looked the part and had given performances that were suitable for the role. I had finally decided on one, and then while browsing information about the actors, a suggested page on Facebook appeared and I was able to find Lauren and Sierra Tothero. I contacted them, they sent a video audition, and I knew instantly I wanted them. Although I was impressed with the Tothero twins, I held

callbacks with both pair of sisters. During these callbacks, I found that Lauren and Sierra Tothero performed closest to what I had envisioned. However, both lived in California. Therefore, we had to work out a budget for both their pay and for their travel and accommodations. From my experience in the negotiation, both had reasonable proposals for these expenses.

### *C. Directing*

Directing, along with cinematography and sound design, have always been my favorite aspects of filmmaking. Ever since my last films, I took classes with great actors like Lance Nichols and attended panels with long trajectory actors such as Isabelle Huppert, Tom Hanks, Bryan Cranston, Miles Teller, and Rooney Mara. I embraced this involvement to understand directing through the actor's perception. Preparation helps, and if understanding the actor's vision is a must, then the director should be compelled to do so. Besides taking UNO's classes, I attended panels and discussion sessions with masters like Mia Hansen-Løve, Kenneth Lonergan, Barry Jenkins, Werner Herzog, and Aisling Walsh. One of the most helpful notes I have received was from Hansen-Løve. Paraphrasing, she told me to let the story evolve into what it really is. She explained how before shooting *L'Avenir (Things to Come)*, she thought the film was going to be a sad, depressing story, for the script contained endless severe negative circumstances for the protagonist. However, during production, she started noticing how these emotions were not present and instead, hope and optimism overcame every disgrace. I kept that lesson very close to me. It is only normal having an outline and a plan for what I want as a director from a film, and there was a fundamental scene in the script that the actors misunderstood. Hansen-Løve's advice helped me push through while changing the tone and ramifications of possibly

one of the most important scenes. Professionalism allowed me to expect certain standards from actors, but understanding and collaboration allowed me so much more. My actor-director relationship started from casting research. Before rehearsals, I made sure to spend time with my cast, mainly my leads, getting to know each other and the project. My one unmovable condition, to all departments, was to avoid sensationalizing or sexualizing the story in any moment, shape or form. I made sure my actors were comfortable with anything that was happening. The script's delicate scenes were thoroughly discussed, planned and executed, providing all the respect and decorum that cast and crew deserved.

Regarding crew, my main challenge was transcribing my ideas to them successfully and confirming those ideas through open communication. In the past year and a half, I have collaborated on many UNO student sets, especially in production and camera department. Not only have I been fortunate to be invited to these sets, but I have also become more and more aware of the dynamics of crew positions other than directorial ones. These continuing collaborative processes helped me find incredibly talented people who compensated and overcame any lacking I might have had.

Most of the scenes were shot without obstacles, other than the usual experienced in filmmaking. These obstacles included missed cues, soft takes, giving the wrong direction, gear malfunctions, forgetting lines, and the need to rework performance between takes. A few crew members experienced high stress, fear of not finishing, or entitlement over directorial choices. Regardless of the form of expression, I understood their passion and support was behind their actions. At times, I was worried or fearing different scenarios. Remembering the planning, reasoning and nature of what I was doing certainly helped me in those times where stress was

peaking. Everyone helped me immensely, but my second assistant director Stevie Cavalier and my main producer Christian Chesnut excelled at keeping my head and the film grounded in its purpose, while trusting me and allowing me to feel that trust.

While directing this film, I experienced new obstacles and triumphs. I had not previously worked with twins or children and had not directed disturbing content. However, I feel that for most of the project, with the help of my crew and talent, I achieved the goals I had set to myself.

### *Cinematography*

I chose a personal story. I wanted that notion to be palpable through the cinematography. Exteriors and the tracking of Sarah, in every scene before crossing through the mirror, had a medium key and natural look. This only changed in three scenarios: first when she is alone with Damon, her stepdad, second, after she crosses the mirror and enters Limbo, and third, every time a memory comes back.

The film looks were going to be essentially three: Pre-Limbo, Limbo, and Post-Limbo. This meaning, everything before she crosses the mirror, when she is in Limbo, and when she crosses back. The flashbacks intend to merge with this looks, making the memories uneasy to differentiate and blend with real time scenarios.

A significant tool to mention is aspect ratio. I had planned for it to change during the film while always maintaining a 4K output. The overlay frame guides on the camera monitor helped us maintain the desired aspect ratios I had envisioned for the story.

The film opens in 4:3 to enhance Sarah's sense of entrapment, living as a stranger in her own house, and worse, as a stranger in her own skin. A reference of this ratio can be seen in

László Nemes' *Son of Saul* and Andrea Arnold's *Fish Tank*. This ratio also allows the audiences to focus on Sarah and each character instead of the surroundings, as if encouraging the audience to prioritize its interest. Once Sarah crosses the mirror, the aspect ratio widens to 16:9, hence widening her perception thorough introspection. A reference to this shift in ratio can be found in Xavier Dolan's *Mommy*, Ang Lee's *Life of Pie*, and Kevin Lima's *Enchanted*. Although it can be found in other films, in the three films mentioned, the aspect ratio follows a strong change in the character's psyches or realm. In *It's Me, Sarah*, this shift not only works symbolically, but also supports the differentiation of moments and locations, following the same idea as the referenced films.

Having twins on set provided a rich, visual scene. Long shots, medium wide shots, and extreme close-ups were used to flaunt that duality, synchronicity, and, at times, resistance between Sarah and Scar-less Sarah.

Cinematography was a strong element for me. The visuals were already in my head, in my look book, and some even in the script. For a while I entertained the idea of doing my own cinematography, but I concluded doing so would end up hurting my time and mind space for directing.

I looked through the reels of multiple cinematographers in trying to determine who would best capture my vision according to my circumstances. Of the many reels I watched, I found approximately four who I was interested in contacting. My first option was a great local female cinematographer, but her rate was out of my budget. Two of the others could not confirm their availability for the time of the shoot. Therefore, I reached out to one who I had worked with previously on another thesis shoot for UNO. Guillermo Cameo told me that he was willing to do

the shoot, and I already knew how great he was. After a very easy conversation he understood my creative intentions and student budget perfectly.

#### *D. Production Design*

Unequivocally, a before and after exists that is part of the outcome of going through trauma. That branding is projected through behavioral changes, external and internal unconscious constructs. The external changes need no figurative representation. For the internal, though, this depiction is essential. I reflected that realm of unconsciousness with a backwards room, which in the script is named Limbo. My approach to the treatment of this duality of realms (conscious = actual bedroom / unconscious = backwards bedroom) was that which happens when thinking of a place one has visited long ago. So long that, upon return, it feels new at first, until the memory persists gradually and recollects the past.

Sarah's bedroom and Limbo are of identical construction. They are the reflection of the other (a reference of this can be found in Sean Goodwin's *The Mirror*). However, when Sarah crosses the mirror that separates the bedroom from the Limbo, she does not find all the posters, music records, and photographs that are on the walls of the bedroom. It is not until Sarah, with the help of Scar-less Sarah, starts remembering, that some of those posters appear on Limbo's walls. This phenomenon resembles the way we recall memories and dress and piece together the details after time. These appearing items not only work as totems of the story but also to help us track Sarah's progress. A reference of missing and appearing items in the place and in memory can be found in Michel Gondry's *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. Both bedrooms were built on UNO's soundstage. As for the look of the bedroom, it took after the

look of most teenager rooms. As for the other locations, the design resembled everyday living, mimicking a place where nothing out of the ordinary happens.

Pre-production for this film started with a plan for the construction of the set. I knew early on that I would need to build a set-in order to have Sarah's bedroom and a mirrored opposite limbo version of it. The first challenge was determining the dimensions of the set to accommodate for the size of the sound stage and the size of the room's interior for shooting. Next, a mirror frame with a removable mirror had to be installed in the middle wall, between the rooms, as a crossover point for Sarah. Sarah's actress would walk through the opening for the mirror while being tracked with the camera. In order to track the movement, we would have to be able to remove the two walls adjacent to the center wall. To solve these problems, I employed the help of Christian, my producer, Elena Bueso, my then production designer, and Deryl Michael, a professional carpenter and also one of my producers, while I focused on other aspects of preparation.

In the middle of pre-production, a major problem occurred: my production designer had to remove herself from the project. My friend and fellow graduate film student Florence Young came in and saved the sinking boat.

Two months prior to the shoot, construction for the set began. At this point, Katie Michael, one of my producers, had found our locations. That allowed us the information to know how to build the room to match the rest of the house. The first day of the set building went well, since we had many people to help, but the amount of people available to help dwindled as the days passed. Also, materials proved to be costlier than I had anticipated since supplies decreased faster than we had foreseen. Not all of the set building was a challenge,



though. One of the more substantial forms of relief came when Kevin Griffith, the head of the theater department's scene shop, donated two walls for the room. Ultimately, the set construction was finished in time to shoot the scenes it was needed for, albeit the day before.

Another major challenge was acquiring the snakes and turtle for the shoot. One of my producers had contacted a snake owner during the preparation process, but this wrangler proved to be unreliable. Therefore, Emily Poulliard, one of the associate producers, came through and contacted a professional animal wrangler she had worked with on set before. I met with him and he provided not only the animal stars, but items to be used as set dressing. He went beyond my hopes and dreams and spoke with his colleague Jessica Mazilly to help us on set during the shoot.

The last major part of pre-production was decorating the rooms with the production designer. Patrick Sanderson, one of the producers had previously won a five-hundred-dollar certificate to the local props rental house NOLA props, which he kindly gave to me. This certificate provided us with many of the props for one of the locations. Other props were obtained either through loan or purchase.

### *Sound*

I was fortunate to have Jonathan Clement, the sound mixer on set, on board. His work ethic was incredible and fundamental for the structure of the film. As for music and sound design, my years as a *dj* came in play and it was really clear to me since the beginning how I wanted to treat the soundscape, and with which pieces. It is very similar to the journey of a set in the *djing* world. I had the mood and story in mind, so all the sound treatment had to do, was to lead or follow or walk beside it whenever it was necessary.

### **III. Production**

#### *Shooting Affairs*

The first day of shooting was September 13, 2018. After considering the logistics of the scenes, we shot the bathroom memory scene from The XX concert first. Since only one scene was shot, less than half a day was required. During this time, construction in the sound stage was still finishing up. I had been hoping for the construction to be finished earlier in the week, but we were able to work around the unfinished rooms by shooting the bathroom scene first.

In preparation for shooting in the bedroom, my production designer staged the room to look like that of a teenaged girl whose interests include music, suspense/action films, and friends. This design included posters, pictures, and a record player. The rest of the set pieces included a shelf, night stand, and other pieces to create a bedroom. One less obvious detail is the painting on the bed frame. Mice are painted on the top of the frame to represent Sarah as the mouse running from Damon, the snake.

The cinematography for the bedroom included lighting that was designed to mimic sunlight. Multiple lights were used to shine through a frosted plastic to create this effect, along with bouncing light off of a sky-blue backdrop. Haze was used complementary to the lighting in order to fill the room with the light, rather than solely reflecting it on surfaces.

Shooting for the second day consisted of the scene where Sarah works with Dr. Yvette on memory exercises and the scene where Sarah has a meltdown due to frustration with trying to remember the event that caused her injury. Since most of the scene had been pre-lit; only minor lighting setups were needed inside the room. The next day's shoot involved the crossover from the real world into limbo. In order to shoot this shot, as mentioned earlier, we

needed to move the walls adjacent to the mirror wall. To achieve this task, a team of sixteen people moved the walls in a diagonal motion as if the walls were a door. Once this task was complete, the dolly tracks could be set up for the shot.

For the limbo scenes, the room was designed to be a scale replica of the bedroom. However, the limbo room was an inversion of the bedroom. This meant that the colors were opposite, the set pieces were facing the opposite direction, and the poster designs were inverted. Every detail in the room was the same, only opposite.

Along with the room's design, the lighting had to represent something different. Therefore, the same lighting setup was used with the multiple lights, but cool colored gels were placed in front of them. A purple backdrop was used instead of the sky-blue as well.

Day three and four were spent shooting the scenes in the limbo. We were able to leave the walls that had been moved open for some of the setups, but eventually had to move the limbo wall back. The shots were captured on a combination of tripod, handheld, and Steadicam, depending on the mood we were trying to set for the scene.

After the first weekend, my cast, crew, and I expanded our shoot to the remote locations. The first day was a half day in which we shot the party scene in a town near Baton Rouge. This day's production required us to wrangle extras as well as set the atmosphere for a party.

To set the tone, we first placed used snacks and trash in different sections of the house. Since one of the shots was a tracking shot, we were required to set a hallway and room to look like an ongoing party. We used a combination of colored lights to further create the mood.

By the second weekend, one of the catering days had been donated and the other three at this point had been supplied from restaurants. One of my producers decided to cook the meals for the last three days.

Day six and seven were shot at a remote location in Walker, Louisiana. We chose this location because it was secluded, which I felt would help to emphasize Sarah's sense of isolation. If she could not reach out for help from an immediate source, she may feel trapped.

The sixth day was spent capturing exteriors. These included the talk between Damon and Alice regarding Sarah's recovery and Damon's initial abuse of Sarah. We chose to schedule the day so that we could shoot one scene during daylight and the next after dark. Lighting for the night scene was complex inside of the barn we had shot in for Damon's workshop. Along with the film lights, we hung three fluorescent lights from the ceiling to create motivated light. In the exterior, we lit the characters mainly with soft lights motivated by the light inside the car, moonlight, and light coming from the barn.

Moving into the seventh day, we faced some of our most important events in the shoot. The first matter was the snake and turtle's use on set for the first time.

The next challenge was working with children. The scene in the living room between Sarah, Damon, Alice, Dr. Yvette, and Dr. Yvette's children proved to be one of the more challenging ones. That set was staged by my production designer, who used and installed taxidermy pieces of different animals to set Damon as the dominant member of the household.

Our next scene was the climactic fight scene between Damon and Sarah. Moving on to my last new experience of this day, I had used a stunt coordinator for the first time. I reached out to my friend and fellow filmmaker Max Fisk to help me choreograph the stunts. With his help,

we were able to shoot the scene without injury and make it appear to be a real struggle.

Though the day was filled with new experiences for me, I consider it one of the most accomplished days of this shoot.

The last day included a company move due to the requirements of what we still had to capture. At this point, some of the limbo scenes still needed to be shot, but we first had to shoot at the railroad yard. This scene proved to be one of the most complicated to shoot and required both animal wrangling and a stunt. The setups took much longer than anticipated due to animal complications, lighting and camera setups, and the stunt that was required for Sarah to fall out of the van.

Also, my makeup artist had to apply special effects makeup between setups to imply that the injury would leave the scars on Sarah. Lastly, during the setups, we had to capture a train moving at random. This shot required us to have the camera ready at all times in case a train passed. After, we moved back to the sound stage to shoot the last scenes in limbo. In these final moments was when I experienced my last challenge: the leads were hesitant to go on with the action for a scene. Understanding the distress that intimate scenes cause, I was not surprised. I decided to work with them to mitigate the affliction. The three of us figured out the scene together and made it work. Succeeding this scene, I was happy to end the production enjoyably. The martini shot was Sarah's head hitting the glass, which results in her facial scars. Though the subject matter was not fun, my crew, actors, and I enjoyed watching Sierra smash her face on sugar glass.

This was a demanding shoot. I was constantly moved and filled with gratitude by the amount of effort, sacrifice and dedication everyone put into it. Although night shoots are very

common in filmmaking, there were some first timers on set, and they did not even flinch. There was people who had to work the next morning, and still were there, giving their best.

I had the most splendid producers; Christian Chesnut was there even before pre-production, when it was all just an idea, and every day after, in literally every aspect of the film; writing, building, permit filing, equipment hunting, logistics, casting, music licensing, catering, creative support, emotional support, set duties, out of set duties, funding, and everything in between.

Yet, he was not alone. Katie Michaels, not only was a great ally as soon as she was on board but made sure to bring her dad, Deryl Michaels, as producer to the table as well. She managed locations, animals, and so many other activities, he let us shoot on his own house, helped with set building, donated materials for the set construction and was a constant source of support and encouragement. Patrick Sanderson donated not only the gift certificates he had won, but offered his own home to house the director of photography. He helped every day on set, assisted on logistics and wore as many hats as he could.

They were not alone either, associate producers like Emily Poulliard came through with the animal wrangler and animal stars, and Laura Duval, who kindly reached out to her contacts for sugar glass, some lodging for extra days for two actors, as well as her valuable presence on set, contributed to make this film possible.

I feel *It's Me, Sarah* was my most enjoyable. I got to face new challenges I had not attempted previously, my cast and crew were excited and enjoyed participating, and I felt that I was able to capture what I wanted from the script. Most importantly, I shot all the footage I had intended to shoot.

#### **IV. Post-production**

##### *A. Editing*

Following the overall look and feel of the film, especially regarding cinematography, I tried to make the editing remain “invisible,” except for the moments of high distress and conflict in the film. Here, a faster pace intensifies the action.

The acquisition resolution was 6K, 5K and 4K FF, at 16:9, yet the output resolution will follow the strategy set by the cinematography aesthetics.

Although the feel of the film is maintained with sound, it is achieved differently. Most humans hear frequencies between 20 Hz to 20 kHz. In regards to sound treatment in post-production, I resorted to low frequencies below 15 Hz, which cannot be heard, but can be felt. I call it the Unconscious’ Rumble. This frequency appears whenever Sarah has a hunch (unconscious impulse) or finds herself in a difficult situation.

The score of my film was done by JPO, and I am in conversations with record labels to obtain the rights to some of their artist’s songs not only for the University screening but for the festival rounds.

Although I made a first pass of color grading, the final color correction will take place in Fotokem, thanks to producer Patrick Sanderson who donated his UNO Film Fest certificate to the film.

Professors Erik Hansen and Laszlo Fulop helped me screen my cuts to their students. Their kindness was a fruitful and valuable tool. I was able to recognize the similarities in taste, depending age and gender, and of course, I learned with detail about specific moments or aspects about the cut. This was possible through surveys and class discussion. I also shared my

cut with my committee members. John Overton, Laszlo Fulop and Erik Hansen were able to offer their feedback. I shared it with other faculty members as well with friends whom I trust.



## **V. Conclusion**

My thesis film *It's Me, Sarah* is the final assignment of my years at The University of New Orleans. I remember taking a flight and landing thousands of kilometers away from home to start my MFA in two or three days. I had very little “hands on” experience with audiovisual storytelling, and although I still do, the language and knowledge of the craft I possess now is significantly different.

During these three years, I was able to get to know a bit of not only the academic norms expected of a student filmmaker but also the cultural undertones of what moves the idea of a movie in the region. Being an international student, I find these differences profoundly interesting. Entering the MFA I got to meet filmmakers that would not only become friends, but true allies and creative confidants. Christian Chesnut, Patrick Sanderson, Flo Young, Amy Laws and Stevie Cavalier are some of them.

While filming in my first year, with regards to directing, I was just nervous and trying to remember techniques by the book. However, I was welcomed to the screenwriting world. I felt there was a lot of power in knowing how to access the craft, and the screenwriting classes changed my perception, for I had a new language to feel and think with. Like most beginners, it took a lot of times and tryouts to look at the screenplay page and not see 80% of it circled in red. My professor Erik Hansen displayed great patience and understanding. Ultimately, that helped me to get started on the long path I have yet to walk in screenwriting.

In my second year I was introduced to cinematography by my professor John Overton, and I loved it. That feeling of the new language all over again, except I had a bit more of familiarity, because I was a photography enthusiast back home. During the second year I received AFI

workshops that helped me tremendously with directing. That made me curious and I decided to try a couple of things in my second year film. In conservative terms, my feedback session went *terribly*, but I had tried new things and although I did not succeed at first, I felt even more committed to examine my projects, mend what I was doing wrong, and keep trying to stretch what I could do. After all, I find the safest place to fail and/or experiment is the academic realm.

For my thesis, I was fortunate to have a thorough and caring committee. At first, I was somewhat concerned about presenting a story with a very strong female gaze to an all-male committee. Not because of any fault of their own, but because there are some aspects that may feel or land different among gender ordinary idiosyncrasies. But soon enough I discovered they were embracing and supportive of the nature of the project. Not only I had a great committee, but I also had an amazing team. Crew and talent were not only talented, but supportive, hard-working and ambitious. That comfort gave me a lot of room to push as much as I could, and experiment all over again. I know I have so much to learn, but I can honestly say that I am proud of my thesis film. I was able to play with, plan, and apply so many ideas. Most of the movie was executed, and looks, just like it did on my head. This was the first time this had happened, being able to translate an idea from my brain to the screen. My filmmaker ability to communicate will always need to increase and improve, but I finally have said my first words.

Shooting this thesis was a review of everything I have learned in the program, and quite frankly, in life. The craft is learned here, but the inspiration and association patterns are ingrained in you in way that depends a lot on what you have lived, and how. I am so thankful I

chose New Orleans and this program. It gave me so much, including a film that says something I consider important, in a way I consider engaging.

## Works Cited

Waheed, Nayyirah. (2013) *Salt*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform. Self Published.  
Van der Kolk, B. (2014). *The body keeps the score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma*. New York: Viking.

## Films Cited

*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless mind*. Directed by Michel Gondry. 2004  
*Life of Pi*. Directed by Ang Lee. 2012  
*L'avenir*. Directed by Mia Hansen-Løve. 2016  
*Son of Saul*. Directed by László Nemes. 2015  
*Mommy*. Directed by Xavier Dolan. 2015  
*The Mirror*. Directed by Sean Goodwin. 2015  
*Fish Tank*. Directed by Andrea Arnold. 2009  
*Enchanted*. Directed by Kevin Lima. 2007

## **Appendices**

### *Appendix A: Screenplay*

IT'S ME, SARAH

Written by

Fabiola Andrade

New Orleans, LA.  
(504) 777-1873  
Fabiolaafm@gmail.com

1 EXT. MIDDLE OF NOWHERE - NIGHT 1  
Pitch black, the sound of a distant train comes closer and louder.  
The louder it sounds, its headlights start bathing *something*.  
The lights slowly reveal weird, shiny shapes. It's glass and blood, all over a face with eyes shut.

2 INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM - MORNING 2  
Open eyes. They blink twice, and stay wide open.  
They move from left to right, then stay in the center.  
A light shines on the right one, then on the other.  
The eyes look up, as if waiting for an answer, but the lips won't open up.  
SARAH, 16, body and face covered in multiple scars, sits on the bed.  
DR. YVETTE BOUDREAUX, *Neurologist*, as her tag displays, turns off the pen light.  
Dr. Yvette walks over to Sarah's desk and retrieves a tray with poker cards.  
DR. YVETTE BOUDREAUX  
Now try to match the color and number, don't worry about the suit.  
Sarah complies.  
Dr. Yvette pays attention to all her moves.  
Sarah nails it.  
Dr. Yvette nods and writes some notes on her note pad.  
DR. YVETTE BOUDREAUX (CONT'D)  
Try increasing the number or rows as often as you can, beat every game. You're doing great.  
Sarah's eyes follow Dr. Boudreaux as she leaves.  
The cellphone rings, she turns to the desk.  
"Logan Boii" calls, it has the contact photo of a suave dude.  
She takes a moment to look at it, then glances at the mirror.

2.

It has photos stuck between the glass and the frame.

The photos have the same group of friends, Logan boii is not in any of them.

The ringing stops. She looks at the phone, Logan's missed call stacks on top of multiple missed calls and messages notifications. She sets the phone on the desk.

Sarah turns back to the photos and stares at her pictures, no scars anywhere. She pulls the photo out of the frame and puts it next to her face. She compares her *before* to her *after*.

Someone knocks.

ALICE (O.S. )  
Come down honey.

She fixes her hair to cover the scar and leaves the room.

3 INT. SARAH'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

3

DAMON, mid 40s, Sarah's step dad, veterinarian and animal foster, sits on the couch holding a pet snake. He shows it to MAGGIE, 10, who sits on his lap. ROBBIE, 12, sits next to him. The kids love it.

Damon puts the animals back in their tanks when Dr. Boudreaux comes down with ALICE, mid 40s, Sarah's mom, High School Volleyball Coach.

The kids rush to their mother. Sarah comes down the stairs.

Alice stares at Sarah, and then, as a command, at the couch. Sarah squeezes next to Damon, where Robbie was.

DR. YVETTE BOUDREAUX  
The tests indicate no signs of  
cranial nerve damage. I agree with  
your primary care physician's  
diagnose. Your brain functions seem  
normal.

Sarah looks down.

DR. YVETTE BOUDREAUX (CONT'D)  
When did the last thing you  
remember take place?

SARAH  
I'm not sure.  
(beat)  
I remember celebrating that we made  
it to nationals, around 5 months  
ago.

ALICE  
Honey tell her what you hear.

SARAH  
The sound of a train comes to me.  
And I don't know why, or where it  
comes from.

Damon holds her hand and comforts it. Alice's phone rings.

DAMON  
It's okay sweetie, these things  
take time.

ALICE  
Do they? What else could we do?

DR. YVETTE BOUDREAUX  
I recommend visiting a  
psychologist, as soon as possible.

Alice's phone rings again and again. She mutes it.

Dr. Boudreaux packs up her things. Alice's phone rings.

ALICE  
Honey, your friends are asking for  
you, you really gonna miss  
nationals?

SARAH  
It's okay.

DAMON  
Is it because of releasing day?

SARAH  
No, maybe, I don't know. It's okay.

ALICE  
You love volley, and you love  
releasing day. I wish you didn't  
have to choose.

SARAH  
I don't have to, I'm fine here  
guys, really.

Alice phone rings again. She answers, walking away from the  
couch. Sarah watches her leave.

Something moves next to her leg. Sarah feels it. She screams  
and immediately gets up.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
AAAAAAHHHH



A snake was left behind, on the couch.

ALICE  
Sarah, that's Mr. Noodles, your favorite.

DAMON  
It probably just missed you, honey.

SARAH  
I, I heard the train when I felt it.

The doctor immediately turns to Sarah.

DR. YVETTE BOUDREAUX  
That could be a good sign, in some cases, memory can be triggered by sensory stimuli.

Damon puts back the snake on the tank.

DAMON  
Mr. Noodles is sorry.

SARAH  
It's okay, thanks.

DAMON  
Yvette, thank you for coming personally and-

DR. YVETTE BOUDREAUX  
Damon, please. And besides, Robbie and Maggie love coming to play with your patients.

DAMON  
They got to say goodbye, today's their releasing day.

ALICE  
Thank you so much Yvette, really.

ALICE (CONT'D)  
Last chance, you sure you're not coming?

SARAH  
I'm 100 percent sure mom, thanks.

Damon pulls a venom necklace trying to comfort her.

DAMON  
Here, from the first snake of our last releasing day.

5.

Sarah smiles.

SARAH

Thank you Damon. I'll be in my room.

4 INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM - NOON

4

Sarah trembles on her way in. A pile of therapy books and memory games lie on her bed. She grabs a book at random.

She reads the first paragraph. Her hands shake so much that the book falls out of her hands. She grabs another one and the same happens.

6 INT. WORK ROOM - AFTERNOON

6

Alice follows Damon to his work room. He places the tanks orderly. Noises from Sarah's room can be heard.

ALICE

Thanks for everything. She's thankful too. She's just going through a lot.

DAMON

I know honey. It'll be fine.

ALICE

How am I supposed to leave her like this? We need to find a psychologist-  
(reaching for her phone)  
I'll just ask another coach to take the trip.

DAMON

Honey, I'll check on her later. A normal weekend could help you both. You're the best coach and Sarah is the best girl.

ALICE

I don't know, today was a big day and-

DAMON

She just needs some time. I'll take care of it. Please, let me be there for both of you.

Alice nods and puts her phone in her purse. He kisses her and continues organizing the tanks. He drops a mouse in Mr. Noodle's tank. The phone rings and she answers as she leaves.

7 INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM -AFTERNOON

7

All the books are on the floor.

Sarah stands in front of the mirror, eyes fixed on a group picture of her and her friends wearing *The XX* T-shirts.

She closes her eyes as if trying to remember.

She squeezes her lids, but disappointment comes through when she opens her eyes. She shakes her head in frustration.

One by one, she scans the photos. The last one is a portrait of her. She looks at her face in the photo and her eyes water. She turns to her face in the mirror and contemplates the scars on her neck and forehead.

Damon knocks.

DAMON (O.S.)

Honey?

She touches the scar on her forehead, and then reaches for it on the mirror.

When she touches the mirror, her hand starts sliding through until she's on the other side. She gasps, then turns back to see through the mirror. Damon's knocking continues.

8 INT. LIMBO - AFTERNOON

8

Sarah's eyes are wide open. She faces a person who looks just like her. Sarah glances around the room. It is identical to hers except backwards and with fewer decorations.

Damon knocks louder.

SARAH

I, I should p-probably go.

DAMON

If you wanna come, be ready by seven.

Sarah turns to leave, but the other girl grabs her hand. Sarah turns to her. The other girl removes her hair from her forehead to reveal no scar.

Sarah gently removes her hand from SCARLESS SARAH.

SARAH

My scars, they're gone.

SCARLESS SARAH

No, they're not.

Sarah, awed, examines Scarless Sarah's appearance.

SARAH  
Who are you?

SCARLESS SARAH  
Who do you think?

SARAH  
How did I get here?

SCARLESS SARAH  
You got here because you want to  
remember. Come sit with me.

Sarah doesn't move.

SARAH  
How old are you?

SCARLESS SARAH  
How old are you?

SARAH  
(to herself)  
What is happening?

Sarah starts to panic. She pinches and slaps herself as if  
trying to wake up. Scarless Sarah stops her.

SCARLESS SARAH  
It's okay. You're awake, and you're  
sane. Well, sorta.

Sarah shakes Scarless Sarah's hand off.

SARAH  
How are you not freaking out? Do  
you know me?

SCARLESS SARAH  
Relax, it's safe in here. And, yes,  
I know you.

SARAH  
How? Prove it. Say something only  
I'd know.

SCARLESS SARAH  
Like what?

SARAH  
What's my favorite band?

SCARLESS SARAH  
The XX and Radiohead.

8.

Sarah sits down with Scarless Sarah while continuously maintaining eye contact.

SARAH  
I don't remember that but I have  
their T-shirt.

SCARLESS SARAH  
You got it at their concert.

9 INT. BATHROOM FLASHBACK- NIGHT

9

Music and crowd noise comes through the walls. Sarah leaves the stall with a set list in her hand. She wipes her tears and heads for the mirror to wash the mascara off.

SARAH (O.S.)  
Was I crying because I kept the set  
list?

SCARLESS SARAH (O.S.)  
Sarah.

10 INT. LIMBO - AFTERNOON

10

Scarless Sarah looks Sarah in the eye.

SARAH  
What?  
SCARLESS SARAH SARAH (CONT'D)  
You remembered I remembered

They smile in complicity. Sarah moves Scarless Sarah's hair to see her forehead. Scarless Sarah stays still, then points toward the wall.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
The set list is back.

The set list is on the wall.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
So, as I remember, they come back?

SCARLESS SARAH  
Yes. Now let's fill the room.

Sarah looks around. She faces an empty spot of film posters.

SARAH  
What goes here?

SCARLESS SARAH  
Movies, shows and artists you love.

SARAH  
Which ones?

Scarless Sarah recreates Neo's famous hand move when he calls Morpheus to fight him.

SCARLESS SARAH  
Nice try, you tell me.

SARAH  
Oh God, you're lame.

Sarah, confirming her guess, tries to jump like Trinity.

Scarless Sarah lifts her hand like "Eleven" does.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
Mouth breather.

Scarless sarah recreates Sia's *Elastic heart* choreography and grabs Sarah's face.

Sarah follows along and continues the choreography.

Scarless Sarah starts a silly victory dance. The posters are back on the walls. Sarah can't believe it.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
Whoa that was easy. You're amazing.

SCARLESS SARAH  
You are!

Sarah kisses Scarless Sarah's forehead. She smiles.

SARAH  
Have I ever been kissed?

Scarless Sarah's smile fades. Her body language is uneasy. Sarah approaches other empty spots on the walls.

SCARLESS SARAH  
Yes.

SARAH  
Really?

SCARLESS SARAH  
Your first one was this year,  
outside the house.

SARAH  
I can't believe I got away with it.  
You know mom.

SCARLESS SARAH  
She wasn't home.

Sarah nods, it makes sense. She turns to Scarless Sarah.

SARAH  
Am I a good kisser?

SCARLESS SARAH  
How would I know?

Sarah gets up and walks to the record player. She chooses a vinyl and plays a song. It's "Gosh" by Jamie XX. Scarless Sarah follows her.

SCARLESS SARAH (CONT'D)  
Why did you choose that one?

SARAH  
Don't know, does it matter?

SCARLESS SARAH  
Maybe-

Sarah turns the volume knob up.

11 INT. HOUSE PARTY - NIGHT 11

A crowd dances. "Gosh" is playing. Sarah and Logan are there. Sarah's eyes are closed as she dances in the crowd.

SCARLESS SARAH (O.S.)  
Where else have you heard this?

12 INT. LIMBO - AFTERNOON 12

Same music track. They dance in sync. They get closer and closer, maintaining eye contact. The limbo is significantly more dressed. Sarah's memories are working.

SARAH  
So you know how to dance?

SCARLESS SARAH  
So you're not gonna think about my question?

SARAH  
I'm enjoying this for a change.

They're close to the mirror. Scarless Sarah points to the picture of Sarah with her friends. Her friends don't appear in the picture yet.

SCARLESS SARAH  
What about your friends?

SARAH  
What about them?

Sarah stops dancing.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
Wait, I asked them to stop coming.  
Why?

Her pupils move left and right as if trying to recall.

SCARLESS SARAH  
Do you remember them?

SARAH  
I think I'm starting to. Josh,  
Katie, Hugo. I, I love them.

SCARLESS SARAH  
You didn't talk to them much before  
the accident.

13 INT. HOUSE PARTY - NIGHT

13

Neon bright lights, speakers are vibrating. Sarah's hair  
waves left and right.

JOSH, KATIE, AND HUGO, teenagers, approach her. Sarah dances  
with LOGAN, muscular, raunchy. He looks suspiciously older  
than Sarah and has difficulty keeping his eyes open.

KATIE  
Hey.

Sarah greets with a nod. Logan does the same, and leaves.

JOSH  
Where have you been?

HUGO  
Are you stoned?

SARAH  
Maybe.

Josh, Katie and Hugo look at each other, then back at Sarah.

KATIE  
Sarah what's going on?

SARAH  
Nothing.



JOSH  
Come on.

HUGO  
And who's this *man*?

Logan comes back, holds hands with Sarah. He takes her away.

LOGAN  
Name's Logan.

SARAH  
Gotta go.

HUGO  
Sarah!?

14 INT. LIMBO - AFTERNOON

14

SARAH  
Wow, I was awful. Why?

SCARLESS SARAH  
You need to figure it out.

SARAH  
No kidding.

SCARLESS SARAH  
Seriously. Time's running out.

Logan booi's ringtone reaches Limbo. They let it ring.

SARAH  
What do you mean "seriously"? I am serious about it.

SCARLESS SARAH  
Well then not serious enough.

SARAH  
Easy for you to say. Not a single scar, not a-

SCARLESS SARAH  
Listen, there isn't time for you to get sensitive. You heard the doctor; the more time passes, the less chance you'll remember who did this to you. You don't wanna know? What if it happens again?

SARAH  
You honestly think I don't want to know? I'm trying, okay?

SCARLESS SARAH

You call that trying? You half-ass those books, and, God forbid you actually try the memory games.

(beat)

Look, I know it's not easy, but you have to face this.

SARAH

What do you know anyway?

SCARLESS SARAH

Why did you choose that song? What happened before the concert that made you cry? Why did you stop talking to your friends? The drugs? All this was before THE accident, you can't be in denial forever.

Damon knocks again. The vibrations reach them in Limbo. They both turn to look and see the door shaking after every knock.

DAMON (O.S.)

Are you ready? It's almost time to leave.

The sound of a train horn floods the room. Sarah's hands hold her head; she's in pain.

SARAH

That train horn.

SCARLESS SARAH

Yes, I hear it too. Don't stop

Sarah bends in pain, hands on her head, turns to the mirror.

SCARLESS SARAH (CONT'D)

Are you Okay?

SARAH

Sure. Thanks for whatever this was, I gotta go.

SCARLESS SARAH

Wait, the train horn, what else are you seeing?

Sarah gets closer to the mirror.

SARAH

Nothing. Anyway, I have to go get ready.

SCARLESS SARAH  
You don't always have to do what  
people say, you know?

SARAH  
Just what you say, right?

SCARLESS SARAH  
Well, it's different.

SARAH  
Because you're the one saying it?

SCARLESS SARAH  
Yes, that's exactly why.

Sarah stops arguing and looks at her with embarrassment.

Knock, knock, knock, the door vibrates after every hit. A  
picture hanging on the door falls. It's of Sarah as a kid.  
The glass breaks into pieces with a crack across her face

The pain in Sarah's face syncs with every knock on the door.

SARAH  
I'm sorry. I seriously try and try,  
but I just can't.

SCARLESS SARAH  
I know you can, you've been doing  
great. The song you've been  
playing, give it another try.

Scarless Sarah uses the remote to play the song. Sarah's  
frowning in pain, her hands still on her head.

The limbo starts spinning. It spins into the concert's  
bathroom, spins into the house party, spins into her bedroom,  
spins into a place with train tracks and-

Blackout.

Sarah faints.

Sarah lies on the bed. Scarless Sarah looks after her, laying  
by her side. Scarless Sarah gently holds Sarah's face and  
turns it toward her.

SCARLESS SARAH  
Does it hurt?

SARAH  
A little.

SCARLESS SARAH  
Do you want me to get something?

SARAH  
I'm fine.  
(beat)  
Sorry about before. I'll do it,  
I'll give it another try.

Sarah goes for the remote and plays "Gosh" again.  
She sits on the bed. Her eyes are fixed on the record.  
The record spins and spins.  
Scarless Sarah sits next to her.  
Sarah turns to her and shakes her head, still nothing.  
Scarless Sarah grabs Sarah's hand and kisses the scar on it  
without letting her hand go.  
Sarah kisses Scarless Sarah on the cheek, and over her face.  
Scarless Sarah shakes her head, and kisses the same scar  
again.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
I promise I've tried all I can to  
remember.

Sarah's eyes are watery.

SCARLESS SARAH  
I believe you. I understand.

Scarless Sarah starts kissing every scar, going from the hand  
to her shoulder. Sarah turns toward her to face each other.

SARAH  
I love you.

SCARLESS SARAH  
I love you, too.

Their hands intertwine.  
Sarah's head tilts back, and if her eyelids weren't closed,  
she'd be looking at the ceiling.  
Sarah's expression changes abruptly. Her eyebrows rise in  
pain.

16 INT. WORK ROOM FLASHBACK - AFTERNOON 16

Sarah puts the turtles back in a tank.

Damon stands in front of her.

He gives her a vial necklace of snake venom.

She puts it on.

17 INT. LIMBO - NIGHT 17

Sarah's eyes remain closed. Her face is filled with affliction.

18 INT. WORK ROOM FLASHBACK - AFTERNOON 18

Damon's face is very close to hers.

He kisses her forehead and smiles at her, nodding. She looks down and shakes her head.

19 INT. LIMBO - NIGHT 19

Sarah's shuts her eyes in pain.

20 INT. WORK ROOM FLASHBACK - NIGHT 20

Damon smells her neck, and leaves the room.

She rips off her vial necklace, tossing it over the tanks.

21 INT. LIMBO - NIGHT 21

Scarless Sarah continues kissing every scar.

40

Sarah looks at him and looks down.

Damon watches her get in the van.

Damon turns the heater to max. Both bring their hands closer to the air vents. She puts her earphones in. They drive away.

23 EXT. RAILROAD TRACK'S STREET - NIGHT 23

Sarah skips a song and lets Gosh play on her phone. Damon parks. He unbuckles his seat belt and opens the tank.

He touches Noodles, then tries to turn up the heat, but it's on maximum. He indicates for Sarah to wrap the snake.

She takes her jacket off and wraps Noodles.

She cuddles Noodles. Damon unbuckles her seat belt.

He kisses Noodles, then kisses Sarah on the cheek and takes the snake from her hands.

Sarah freezes after the kiss.

He brings the snake to her face. Close to her lips. Sarah flinches. She leans on the door.

An approaching train sounds muffled by the distance. Damon looks at it and looks around, inspecting the area.

24 INT. LIMBO - NIGHT 24

Sarah slowly looks at Scarless Sarah.

Scarless Sarah nods yes as if saying "I know". Scarless Sarah's lets Sarah rest on her chest, and holds her.

Sarah cries and Scarless Sarah doesn't let go.

25 EXT. RAILROAD TRACK'S STREET FLASHBACK - NIGHT 25

Sarah tries to pull the lock handle up. She struggles to push Damon's arm away and hits the snake instead.

Damon screams at her and cradles the snake to his chest. He presses the tank harder.

He begins to slip the snake between her legs, under the skirt.

Damon takes the snake out from her skirt. He smashes her head against the tank. She's gone.

18.

Damon freaks out and pushes the body, and the tank out of the van.

The van speeds off. Sarah lies on the ground motionless.

26

INT. LIMBO - NIGHT

26

They look at each other. Scarless Sarah wipes Sarah's tears.

SARAH

It was him.

(beat)

Why didn't you tell me?

SCARLESS SARAH

Would you have believed me?

SARAH

I shouldn't have gotten in the car with him. It was my fault.

SCARLESS SARAH

What? No. Of course it's not your fault.

SARAH

Mom will think it's my fault.

SCARLESS SARAH

No, hey, listen to me, it's not your fault. None of this is your fault. Understand? You gotta tell her. Tell the police. Understand?

SARAH

I don't know.

SCARLESS SARAH

What do you mean you don't know?

SARAH

You don't understand.

SCARLESS SARAH

Of course I understand. Do you?

SARAH

I could've said something the first time he kissed me.

SCARLESS SARAH

Sarah, please, you didn't know what to do. It's different now.

Sarah remembers everything. The walls are fully dressed.

19.

27 INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 27

Damon knocks again.

28 INT. LIMBO - NIGHT 28

Sarah turns to Scarless Sarah. They hear the knocks.

SCARLESS SARAH

He's back.  
(beat)  
Call the police, pretend nothing  
has changed, and get out.

Sarah doesn't say a word.

SCARLESS SARAH (CONT'D)

Did you hear me?

SARAH

If I leave, can I come  
back?

SCARLESS SARAH

You won't have to. Trust me.

Scarless Sarah hugs Sarah. Sarah kisses her cheeks, her lips,  
and they intertwine their hands.

SARAH

I love you.

SCARLESS SARAH

And I love you.

Sarah crosses the mirror into the bedroom.

29 INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 29

She looks for her phone but the battery is dead. She finally  
plugs the charger to the wall. She looks through the crack  
underneath the door. No Damon anywhere.

She leaves the room slowly, quietly.

She peaks before coming downstairs.

30 EXT. FRONTYARD - NIGHT 30

She leaves the house and sees the van. Damon is not in it  
yet.

She heads to the street. Almost there.



Damon comes from the back of the van.

DAMON (O.S.)  
It's almost time, I'm glad you're coming.

Sarah tries to act normal. He walks her to the

31 INT. WORK ROOM - NIGHT

31

DAMON  
Wait. Guess who's coming with us?

Damon starts walking toward her holding Mr. Noodles. He can tell she remembers.

DAMON (CONT'D)  
Bad things happen to bad girls.  
That's what Mr. Noodles says. Wanna say hi to him?

Sarah freezes.

DAMON (CONT'D)  
I don't understand why you had to ruin our special adventure.

He cradles the snake on his chest and pets it.

DAMON (CONT'D)  
It took me some time, but, I forgave you. We both did.  
(beat)  
We had the chance of a fresh start.

SARAH  
Let me out, please.

DAMON  
(To the snake)  
Somebody hasn't learned their lesson.

SARAH  
Help, anyone, please help.

Damon approaches her. She steps back. She bumps in the cages

He turns her around and grabs her hair. He tries to slip the snake between her legs.

DAMON  
I was cured, but you wouldn't stop asking for it. You just wouldn't stop.

21.

Sarah can't breathe, she can't take his arms off of her.

DAMON (CONT'D)  
Coming to my shed to seduce me,  
playing with my treasures.

Sarah tries and tries to get his arms off of her, she goes for her short pocket and touches the venom necklace.

She opens it, and throws it on Damon's wounded face.

He backs off and tries to wipe the venom off rapidly. He hyperventilates.

DAMON (CONT'D)  
(agonizing)  
Why did you make me love you?

Sarah frantically tries to stand up.

She leaves the shed and runs away.

32 EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

32

Sarah's feet are running.

INTERCUT TO:

Reverse flashback of her face smashing the glass.

INTERCUT TO:

Sarah runs keeps running away.

INTERCUT TO:

Reverse flashback of Sarah by the mirror comparing her face in the mirror with her face in an photo before her scars.

INTERCUT TO:

She is crossing the woods. She looks up.

INTERCUT TO:

Reverse flashback of Sarah and Scarless Sarah dancing.

INTERCUT TO:

Sarah runs and runs.

INTERCUT TO:

22.

Reverse Flashback of Sarah and Scarless Sarah hugging.

INTERCUT TO:

Reverse flashback of Sarah's eyes in Limbo.

INTERCUT TO:

Her eyes look forward.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END

*Appendix B: Crew List*

**Writer/Director/Producer/Casting/Colorist:** Fabiola Andrade  
**Producers:** Christian Chesnut, Fabiola Andrade, Katie Michael, Deryl Michael, Patrick Sanderson  
**Associate Producers:** Emily Poulliard, Laura Duval  
**Director's Assistant:** Cloe Farthing  
**1st AD:** Nick Manning  
**2<sup>nd</sup> AD:** Stevie Cavalier  
**2<sup>nd</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> AD:** Dustin Foret  
**PA:** Ian Glotfelty, Reed Paker

**Cinematographer:** Guillermo Cameo  
**1<sup>st</sup> AC:** Amy Laws, Tricia Towey, Noell Dominick, Ryne Anderson  
**2<sup>nd</sup> AC:** Kyla Mchenchie, Ian Debautte, Oswaldo Posas, Andrew Madden  
**Still Photographer:** Ian DeBautte  
**DIT:** Grant Lambert, Emma McDermott

**Gaffer/Steadicam Operator:** Duane Prefume  
**Key Grip:** David Brocato  
**Grip:** Griffith Goranson, Joshua Joseph, Griffith Goransson

**Sound Mixer:** Johnny Clement  
**Boom Operator:** Scarlett Scalise, Zachary Toole  
**Sound Utility:** Scarlett Scalise

**Script Supervisor:** Alex Chevez, Ashlyn Guidry

**Production Designer:** Florence Young  
**Costume Designer:** Emily Mouton, Katalea Ford, Emelie Morrison  
**Art Director:** Justin Faxon  
**Property Master:** Gabriela Aldana  
**Art Assistant:** Reed Parker

**Hair & Makeup:** Rose Salvaggio, Michelle Lepori

**Editors:** Dustin Foret  
**Assistant Editors:** Emma McDermott, Thomas Baumgardner  
**Colorist:** Fabiola Andrade  
**Composer:** Juan Pablo Ordonez

*Appendix C: Cast List*

**Sarah:** Lauren Tothero  
**Scar-less Sarah:** Sierra Tothero  
**Damon:** John Neisler  
**Alice:** Wendy Miklovic  
**Dr. Yvette Boudreaux:** Anna Watt  
**Logan:** Henry Goldkamp  
**Katie:** Stevie Cavalier  
**Hugo:** Patrick Sanderson  
**Josh:** John Charles III

# IT'S ME, SARAH

**GENRE: DRAMA**

**SUB-GENRE: COMING OF AGE/ MYSTERY/  
PSYCHOLOGICAL-THRILLER**

**VISUAL REFERENCES BY FABIOLA ANDRADE**

## **VISUAL TAXONOMY**

### **THRILLER ICONOGRAPHY:**

- SNAKES**
- MIRRORS**
- WOODS**
- SHADOWS**
- CONFINED SPACES**
- MENTAL ILLNESS**
- BLOOD**
- SCARS**
- VAN**

### **COMING OF AGE ICONOGRAPHY:**

- PHONE**
- HEADPHONES**
- HOUSE PARTY**
- SEXUALITY**
- DRUGS /**
- ALTERED STATE**
- COLORS**

## **Notes & Considerations.**

**\*WE WILL TELL THE STORY FROM SARAH'S POV.**

**TO ACCENTUATE THE THRILLER EDGES, WE  
COULD BE BEHIND HER AND THEN CATCH UP TO  
WHAT SHE'S SEEING.  
THRILLER LIVES AND BREATHE ON REACTION  
SHOTS.**

**FLAT SPACE COULD BE USED OUTSIDE LIMBO.  
DEEP SPACE IN LIMBO AND WHEN SHE ESCAPES.**

**WITH FLASHBACKS WE COULD START ON A SORT  
OF SNORRICAM EFFECT, TO THEN GET BEHIND  
HER OR REGULAR COVERAGE.**

**\*WE WILL USE THE DISTANCE BETWEEN  
THE CAMERA AND THE SUBJECT & LIGHT  
TEXTURE TO CONVEY A COMING OF AGE  
STORY.**

**AND SHOT SIZE, CAMERA MOVEMENT, AND  
LIGHTING RATIO TO CONVEY THE THRILLER  
GENRE.**

**ANGLE/PLACEMENT WILL SERVE BOTH,  
COMING OF AGE AND THRILLER FEEL,  
DEPENDING THE PURPOSE OF THE SCENE.**

## LIGHTING RATIO REFERENCES

\*The naturalistic approach sustained outside limbo while in a “non direct dangerous situation” could be a 2:1 lighting ratio. We could increase that as danger becomes more imminent.

\*Conflict and Fight scenes, Van scenes, could have a 8:1 ratio or similar.

\*For Limbo higher ratios could work given the surrealist feeling of it, as long as we don't have a creepy look. **Limbo is a safe, healing and loving place of self discovery.**

## ASPECT RATIO /FRAMING REFERENCES

\*4:3, mainly used before Limbo, gives us an opportunity to look at our subject up close, in the eye. It gives us a chance to create an intimacy that will help the audience care for Sarah and her struggle. (Fish Tank, Mommy, Just the end of the world)

\*For Limbo, Tree of Life's and some Mommy's reference shots illustrate how unusual angles could add to the surrealist feeling.

## SHOT SIZE / FRAMING

\*Camera angles are a very important aspect in psychological thrillers as it sets the mood for the audience, which helps build tension so the film is more effective.

- Close up and extreme close ups.
- MID SHOTS
- High angle shots
- Low angle shots -
- Canted angles
- Wide shot
- Panning shots

\*We will exploit our advantage of having twins, by using lots of mid Shots, and different sizes of Two shots.

\*180 degree rule is used in thrillers often by crossing this rule to create a disorientation and distorting the audience's sense of direction giving the same affects as a canted angle would



## CAM MOVEMENT

\*Thrillers, given their mysterious nature, tend to avoid long, revealing shots when it comes to shots. Instead they pan, tilt, jib, and track following what we must discover, or be revealed.

\*When Sarah is with her Family, still camera that pans or tilts could give it a more constricted, inflexible feeling.

When Sarah is in Limbo she could have a more flowy, relaxed feel to it.

\*During the events that happen in flashbacks, a good example is the cam movement used in Mean Streets, ricochet biscuit scene. This resembles the snorricam. Although was achieved differently.

\*Whenever Sarah is with Damon, Scarless Sarah or on her own. He Would jib up or down following her movements, discovering with her at the same time.  
+I suppose this could also be done with a Steadicam if the Jib consumes too much time.

## *Appendix E: Look-Book*



### 1- General aspects

- General Considerations
- Technical
- Exposure

### 2- Camera work

- Composition
- Movement and Operation
- Optics
- Shots and Transitions

### 3- Lighting

- General
- Contrast
- Lighting

### 4- Color

### 5- Production Design and wardrobe

- Color
- Consideration
- Avoid

### 6- Color grading

### 7- Visual FX

## 1- GENERAL ASPECTS

### A) GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this projects we are dealing with 3 internal looks:

- 1) Sarah's World (till she goes to the Limbo)
- 2) Limbo
- 3) Sarah's world has been changed (when Sarah leaves the Limbo, it's a mix of both Looks, same scenario as Look 1 with new things "brought" from Look 2)

	LOOK 1	LOOK 2	LOOK 3
Aspect Ratio	4 by 3	1.85 by 1	1.85 by 1
Composition	Flat, static	Depth, dynamic	Depth, Dynamic
Movement	Static, slow	A lot of movement	A lot of movement
Contrast	Soft Contrast, Low Key	High Contrast, Low key	Soft Contrast, Low Key
Color Palette	Yellows/greens	Reds/blues	Yellows/green
Lighting	Realistic	Surreal	Realistic
Color grading	Desaturated	Saturated	Desaturated

### B) TECHNICAL

Resolution: 5k FF

RC: 6:1

Format: R3D ISO:

800

Aspect Ratio:

Look 1: 4:3

Look 2: 1.85:1

Look 3: 1.85:1

### C) EXPOSURE

- Low key cinematography
- Key +1/2 to -2
- Background: -1 to -2
- Highlights around: +2 to +1 (60-80 IRE)
- Shadows not clipping: -3 (get them to 5-10 IRE)

## 2- CAMERA WORK

### A) COMPOSITION

#### LOOK 1

- 2D frames, flat backgrounds
- play with negative space to create tension
- Try to avoid as much as we can Eye Level positions – Symmetry, STATIC FEELING

#### LOOK 2 + 3

- 3D, looking for depth
- Balanced and harmonic compositions, DYNAMIC
- Negative space in the standard position
- Play foreground – midground - background

### B) MOVEMENT AND OPERATION

- Pans to reveal
- Dolly to reveal

#### LOOK 1

- Mostly static
- Low rhythm, let the frame speak for us (we want to feel as Sarah, out of the world. The world moves around her but she's missing something, she feels overwhelmed)
- Use of slow dolly ins
- Use of smooth steadycam as a POV (optional)

#### LOOK 2 + 3

- More dynamic, more movement
- The rhythm is faster, as she enters in the Limbo.
- Use of steadycam shots
- Small movements for every action (sitting down = small boom down) – Handheld movement for fight scenes (bedroom and car)

### C) OPTICS

Lenses: Superspeeds

F-stop: 1.4 / 2

Filtration: hollywood black magic ¼

Range: Medium to Long range

#### D) SHOTS and TRANSITIONS

- Keep longer shots for Villain
- Possibility to break the 180 inside the Limbo and during fight scenes – Use of whip pan for transitions. –  
Use transitions “by shape”
- Slightly high angle for kiss scenes
- possibility to use Z axis rotation with steadicam in Limbo

#### E) TAXONOMY

Thriller Iconography: Snakes, Mirrors, Woods, Shadows, Confined Spaces, Mental Illness , blood, scars, van

Coming of age Iconography: Phone, Headphones, House party, sexuality, Drugs / altered state, colors.

### 3- LIGHTING

#### A) CONTRAST

##### LOOK 1 + 3

- Soft contrast, low key
- From 3:1 to 6:1 based on time of the day and moment of the story.
- It's a realistic look.

##### LOOK 2

- High contrast image overall
- It will be around 4:1 to 8:1
- Play foreground-midground-background in a different layers of exposure

## B) LIGHTING

### LOOK 1 + 3

The Lighting style will be a "Soft contrast realism"

We will push the lighting to meet our goals in terms of contrast, quality and direction as much as we can, without losing sense of realism and justification.

- Grounded on Realism
- Heavily based on practical lights and Windows (respecting quality, color and direction)
- Preference for side light
- Backlight only when it's justified (but try to)
- Use of kickers on Damon
- Hard or semi-hard lighting on Damon
- Underexpose Key light when it's possible
- Color: standard
- Use of haze
- Standard tungsten practical lights

### LOOK 2

The Lighting style will be a "Surrealism".

Lighting will be based on the location but it will be pushed beyond realism.

- Not grounded on Realism
- Dramatic lighting, beams of hard lights.
- Not based on practical lights or Windows
- Underneath light
- Preference for top light and underneath fill
- Non-directional lighting (there's not a clear source)
- Eye light always
- Color: altered to match the color palette for the Limbo
- Use of Haze
- Light Amber practical lights

#### 4- COLOR

Color will apply to all the Production Design, Props and Wardrobe.

##### LOOK 1 + 3

Hue: Greens, yellows, browns

Saturation: Mid saturation

Brightness: Mid to dark

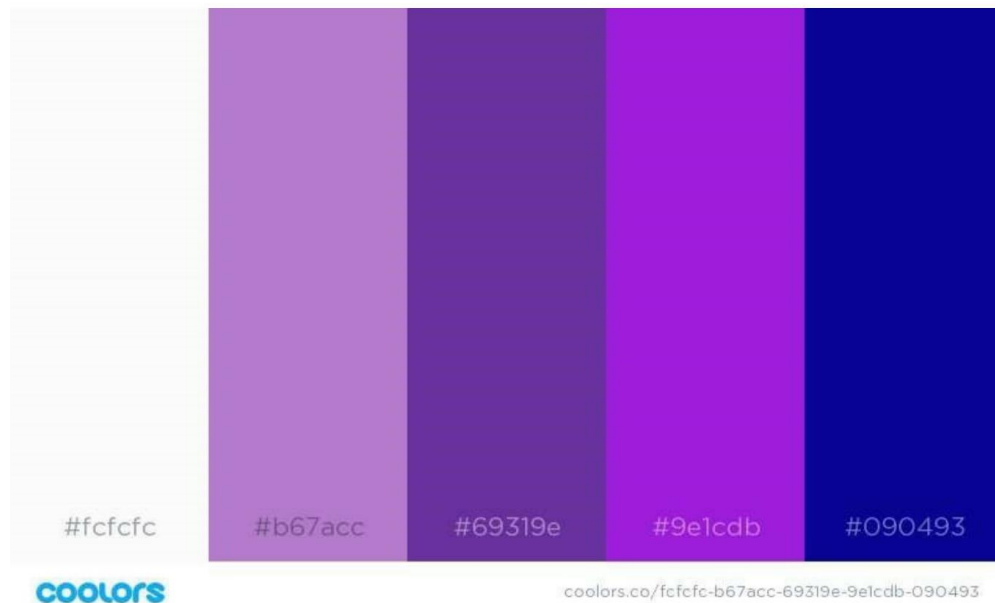


coolors

[coolors.co/6b4221-434421-b29d59-72824f-4c5e35](https://coolors.co/6b4221-434421-b29d59-72824f-4c5e35)

## LOOK 2

Hue: Blues, Purples, Reds  
Saturation: High Saturation  
Brightness: Bright to Mid

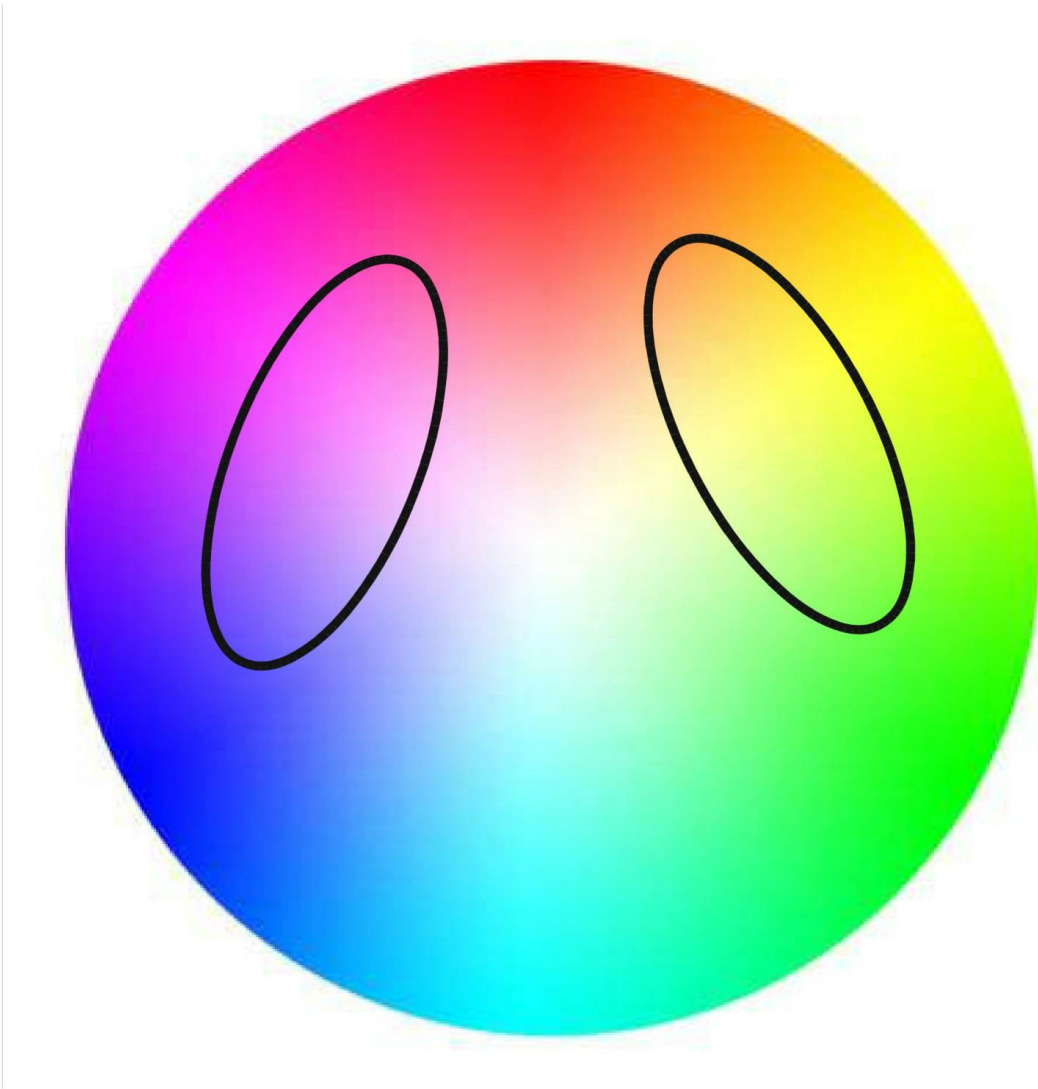


### COLOR WHEEL:

\*Keep in mind that this color wheel only treats saturation and Hue. In terms of brightness (not represented here) we would have darker tones in the greens and yellows (getting more browns and olives).







## 5- PRODUCTION DESIGN and WARDROBE

### CONSIDERATIONS FOR SET BUILDING:

- walls like real house
- check floor

#### A )Color

- Use Color Palette 1 for: Sarah's Room, All wardrobe except scarless Sarah, All props except Limbo
- Use Color Palette 2 for: everything related to Limbo, including scarless Sarah wardrobe

The goal is to create a mirrored image between Sarah's Room and the Limbo but with a completely different color palette. This includes:

- Props
- Walls (Preferred wallpaper with some MOTIF). In this case, same Motif for both rooms but different color.
- Wardrobe

The rest, furniture, windows, curtains and lamps should be the same.

#### B) Considerations

- Keep in mind that the walls of the room should kind of match the real location
- The junction between the floor and the walls should be nice, so we can shoot high angles
- Windows should be replicated with the frame (the classic cross), thick curtains on the extremes and a translucent white curtain in the middle.
- Keep space enough behind the windows for the backdrop and the lighting. Avoid  
flat walls, add texture, wallpaper...

#### C) Avoid (wardrobe, props and production design)

- reflective glasses
- white wardrobe
- square or stripes wardrobe
- reflective props

## 6- COLOR GRADING

### LOOK 1

- No deep blacks
- Soft contrast
- Desaturated look
- slightly warm tones in the highlights
- Add yellow tint (subtle) in practical lights and warm lighting
- Add 500T film grain in the shadows and midtones (really subtle)

### LOOK 2

- Deep blacks
- Medium contrast
- Control the gradient on the walls
- Saturated look
- Pop reds, purples and blues (only in midtones)
- Untinted shadows
- Add 500T film grain in the shadows and midtones (really subtle) –      Soften the highlights slightly

### LOOK 3:

- Same as Look 1 but keeping the saturation from Look 2

## 7- Visual Effects

To be considered:

- Vibrations when they are inside the limbo
- Photo falling to the ground
- Glass breaking
- Cuts and bloods
- Poison on Damon's face
- Any scene with snakes
- Reflection following Sarah: green screen or Actor not crossing the "reflection".

The Blue-Ray copy of the thesis film *It's Me, Sarah* is located in the Earl K. Long Library.

## **Vita**

Fabiola Andrade is a filmmaker studying Film Production at The University of New Orleans. For undergrad she received a degree in Communication & Advertising with a focus in Audio-visual Production. Now immersed in film, inspired by her multicultural heritage & interdisciplinary background, she writes and directs locally and abroad. The constant themes in her projects include self-empowerment, identity exploration, and the surreal manifestations of the so called "ordinary life". In between projects, she joins Production teams in Louisiana, or brainstorms on some steps by the New Orleans' levee.